

**Mae'r cofnodion hyn yn amodol ar gymeradwyaeth yng nghyfarfod priodol  
nesaf y Pwyllgor**

**These Minutes are subject to approval at the next appropriate meeting of the  
Overview & Scrutiny Committee**

**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Minutes** of the Special Meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held at the County Borough Council Offices, The Pavilions, Cambrian Park, Clydach Vale on Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 at 5 p.m.

**PRESENT**

County Borough Councillor L.M.Adams – in the Chair

**County Borough Councillors**

H.Boggis	E.George	D.Macey
J.Bonetto	J.Harries	G.Thomas
J.Brencher	P.Jarman	L.G.Walker

**Non Committee Members in Attendance**

S.Bradwick	M.Griffiths	M.Weaver
A.Calvert	G.Holmes	E.Webster
A.Chapman	G.Jones	J.Williams
A.Cox	L.Jones	T.Williams
J.Cullwick	W.Owen	C.J.Willis
J.R.Davies	D.Owen-Jones	

**Education Co-opted Members in Attendance**

Mr.J.Fish – Elected Parent/Governor Representative  
Mr.C.Jones – Representing GMB

**Officers in Attendance**

Mr.A.Wilkins – Head of Legal – Corporate and Democratic Services  
Ms.K.May – Head of Democratic Services

**46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from County Borough Councillor E.Stephens and from the following Non Committee Members:-  
County Borough Councillors G.R.Davies, D.Grehan, P.Howe, J.James, S.Morgans, S.Pickering and S.Rees-Owen.

**47     DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**RESOLVED** – to note that in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct no personal interests were made at the meeting pertaining to the agenda.

**WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION – GREEN PAPER –  
STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT: DELIVERING FOR PEOPLE**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and indicated that an invitation to this meeting had been extended to all Non Executive Members and Education Co-opted Members.

Following the meeting of Council held on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2018, Members views were sought on the above Welsh Government Consultation document in order that their comments/views could be reported to full Council on the 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2018 in readiness for the Council's response to be made by the 12<sup>th</sup> June, 2018.

The Head of Legal – Corporate and Democratic Services introduced to Members the salient points within the Green Paper and stated that the Welsh Government is consulting on:-

- A potential policy to create larger, stronger local authorities and options for implementation;
- How to ensure elected Members have the support and reward they need to undertake their roles effectively;
- What additional powers and flexibilities local government needs.

It was reported that the consultation document deals primarily with the proposal to create fewer larger authorities by way of three options namely:-

- Option 1 – Voluntary Mergers
- Option 2 – A phased approach with early adopters merging first followed by other Authorities
- Option 3 - A single comprehensive merger programme

Following the overview made by the Head of Legal – Corporate and Democratic Services, all Members were in agreement that they did not wish to go through the questions posed in the consultation document but wished to have recorded that they were strongly opposed to the proposals set out in the document for the reasons as set out below.

Members were somewhat bemused with the proposals of the Welsh Government following responses to previous consultation documents by this and other Welsh Authorities in respect of reforming Local Government and Cabinet Secretary statements made in Autumn 2016 giving a commitment that the current number of County Councils will remain at 22 for at least 2 terms (the next 10 years). These statements were followed by a consultation in January 2017 relating to the White Paper - Reforming Local Government: Resilient and Renewed. This White Paper set out a new approach to reform based on greater regional working and collaboration, which would be made mandatory in some areas but allow local authorities to undertake service planning, commissioning and delivery at an appropriate scale.

Members were concerned that the latest Green Paper did not address the fundamental issues of collaborative working and properly acknowledge where Authorities are already working together voluntarily, making many advances since publication of the Williams Commission report. Members provided examples such as the RCT administration of the RCT Pension Fund on behalf of multiple admitted bodies, the Wales Pension Partnership, the Cardiff Capital Region City Deal, the Cwm Taf PSB, Tomorrow's Valley Waste project, the Joint Youth Offending Service with Merthyr Tydfil CBC and collaboration with Health in areas such as delayed transfers of care via the StayWell@Home Service.

The future demographics of Welsh Authorities had also not been addressed satisfactorily within the consultation document. Table 8 referred to an average Council Tax charge for a Band D property whereas within Rhondda Cynon Taf, the majority of properties are Band B. Table 12 also set out the average Councillor to Elector Ratio for each Authority but did not take into account the Census figures which highlights a large number of individuals are not currently registered on the Electoral Register. Also, the data provided in the tables does acknowledge the position if Electoral Reform proposals, consulted on by Welsh Government, were brought into force. These include mandatory voter registration and lowering the voting age in Welsh Local Government elections to 16 which would both impact on the Councillor to Elector Ratio.

It was also commented that the merging of authorities will ultimately result in a reduction of staff in order to achieve the proposed savings outlined in the Green Paper. Members commented that this would have a detrimental impact on families and the local economy. It was therefore felt that the document does not benefit the people that Councillors represent as they have a duty to serve their constituents in the best way possible with the limited resources available. Members also commented that the role of a Councillor was not limited to 'three days a week', that they were the first point of contact in the majority of cases and added that the queries they were now dealing with in today's world on behalf of constituents were particularly complex.

Members were also of the view that the proposals within the Green Paper was a move to strip powers out of local government and was not fit for purpose. Subject to appropriate Governance being put in place Members would like to see additional powers being afforded to Local Government and requested Welsh Government consider suggestions already put forward by Local Authorities and the WGLA in this regard.

One Member also referred to the Health Boards where the three worst performing Health Boards were in fact the three largest and that this goes against Welsh Government's view that larger authorities lead to stronger, higher quality and more resilient organisations.

Whilst Members did not respond to the questions posed by the Welsh Government, they were alarmed at many of the questions that were set, particularly questions (a) and (e) in Chapter 3 and question 4 in Chapter 5.

One long-standing Member referred to Local Government Reorganisation in 1996 when she was on the Transition Committee in 1995, which was the most challenging time in her public life as there is a `human cost`. She was also concerned with the comment made by the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Service in the Foreword which states "*I have already asked council leaders what new and additional powers they want to better deliver high quality services...*" Shouldn't it be a case of the Minister sharing with Councillors what those powers are likely to look like? Further on in the Foreword reference is made to "*We need Councillors **old** and new who reflect the diversity of communities...*" it was felt that it would've been far more professional to use the word 'experienced' rather than 'old'.

Following the comments made, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contributions noting they would be detailed in the report that is to be presented to the Council Meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> April 2018.

**L.M.ADAMS  
CHAIR**

**The meeting closed at 6.17 p.m.**